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[Title Page]

sedentary existence based on primitive agriculture, and abandonment of a nomad life as gatherers of wild sago and other forest products ... Although agriculture is now important, there is no doubt that the Sulungs are at heart food-gatherers and hunters, who infinitely prefer a nomadic life in the forest to the more sedentary way of life they are now taking to .... There is a good case for assuming the Sulungs to have been entirely sago-gatherers when they first came under outside domination: borne out by their own traditions that they learnt cereal cultivation from the Daflas, by the identity of technique with that tribe, and above all by their being at the present day at a stage transitional between the practice of fixed cultivation and that of food-gathering".

STONOR thought that the Sulung "are probably the only people of Mongolian stock on the Asiatic mainland who still maintain an economy based largely on food-gathering and hunting", and that "they may well be the most primitive of Mongolian tribes surviving anywhere". This is, of course, an error. Apart from the Raji of Kumaon, who are in a transitional stage to a certain extent comparable to that of the Sulung, we know the mongoloid Phi Tong Luang or Yumbri of northern Siam, who are still pure primitive food-gatherers and hunters. It is precisely their wide distribution which gives these small scattered tribes particular importance, since it sheds some light on the racial history of southern Asia and on the early cultural stages of the great mongoloid race.

STONOR estimates the number of Sulung at perhaps six or seven thousand.

CHRISTOPH VON FÜRER-HAIMENDORF, *Culture Types in Assam Himalayas*, Indian Geographical Journal, Vol. XXI, No. 2, 1946.

C. R. STONOR, *The Sulung Tribe of the Assam Himalayas*, Anthropos, Vol. XLVII, 1952, pp. 947—962.

Andaman Islands

The ten tribes of the Great Andaman group are practically extinct as a result of their contact with civilization. At the time of Dr. B. S. GUHA's visit, in 1948, only 31 persons survived. We are fortunate in having two outstanding monographs on these tribes, EDWARD HORACE MAN's *On the Aboriginal Inhabitants of the Andaman Islands*, first published in the "Journal of the Anthropological Institute" in 1882, and later as a book, and A. R. RADCLIFFE-BROWN's *The Andaman Islanders*, Cambridge, 1922 (2nd edition 1933). Yet, it should not be forgotten that MAN, although an excellent and conscientious observer, was not a trained anthropologist, and that at the time RADCLIFFE-BROWN was in the Andamans, 1906 to 1908, the native population had shrunk to a fraction of its original size,

114 while its culture was already in the process of disintegration. [161] Moreover, MAN dealt almost exclusively with the South Andaman [182] tribes, mainly with the Aka-Bea, while RADCLIFFE-BROWN's researches were centered mainly on some of the northernmost tribes. As a result, not all the tribes were given equal attention. This is regrettable since their religious concepts and myths were by no means uniform. Therefore one cannot say that our information about the ten Great Andaman tribes is as full and up to modern standards as would be desirable. There is, of course, no more hope of ever filling the existing gaps in our knowledge. It is the more necessary that the still relatively intact groups of Andamanese be thoroughly studied before it is too late.

Ongi (Onge)

161 [101] [648] The Ongi of Little Andaman owe their survival to their isolation and to the fact that they remained hostile until the end of the 1880's and even thirty years ago were not yet considered as quite reliable. Nevertheless, their numbers are constantly decreasing as the following estimates in the various Census Reports seem to indicate

1901 . . . 672
1911 . . . 631
1921 . . . 346
1931 . . . 250

161 114 Of course, these figures, being mere estimates, are not reliable, and the last two are too low. As Professor LIDIO CIPRIANI of Florence, who spent many months with the Ongi in 1952, 1953, and 1954, kindly informed us, he came to different results. In his letter, dated May 2nd, 1958, he writes:

" I visited all communal huts with aim of taking a census of the Ongi. Every family has a bed in a communal hut, i. e. a kind of 'ritual' bed on which they marry and under which they are buried when they die. I prepared a list of persons using each bed. This added up to about 500 Ongi, but I saw less than 200 of them. The majority is still very shy and, when approached, ready to disappear into the jungle. The names of the absent persons were given to me by other Ongi. I left this list of personal names with the Department of Anthropology, Indian Museum, Calcutta, but kept a copy".

161 This would seem to indicate that the situation is not quite as bad as appears from the Census Reports. But even so, it is very serious and is constantly deteriorating. The Census Report of 1931 [164] says that "the numbers decrease year by year mainly from infection [182] such as influenza introduced at times of contact with civilization. Some septs have almost completely disappeared during the last years".

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In a recent paper Dr. N. DATTA-MAJUMDER, Director, Department of Anthropology, Government of India, writes:

"From a study of 34 Onge families contacted by us, it is found that the average size of the family is only 3.15. Thirteen families out of 34 are childless. That is, 38.2% of the married couples are sterile".

When, in 1946, proposals were made for undertaking work for the amelioration of the conditions of the inhabitants of the Andaman Islands along the same line as had been done among the Bhil and other tribes of Central India, Dr. B. S. GUHA, at that time Director of the Department of Anthropology, very reasonably observed that "the problem of the aborigines of the Andaman Islands is not the same as that of the other primitive tribes of India", and that "the need among them is not so much the spread of education and social uplift as the arrest in the decline in population which has been most alarming".

The Ongi have been in sporadic contact with the outside world for many years. They have been visiting Port Blair, particularly since some of them moved to Rutland Island on the southern tip of Great Andaman. This contact with civilization was bound to affect their material culture, as well as their whole mentality. We may again quote Dr. DATTA-MAJUMDER who says:

"As a result of this long contact the Onge have already come to appreciate a number of foreign articles, for example, tobacco leaves, tea leaves, sugar, matches, aluminium utensils and implements made of iron (especially bill-hooks and files). In order to secure these articles, they often barter away their valuable honey and shells. The afore-mentioned changes in material culture have at present touched only the fringe of Onge culture. But the demand for these articles (especially tobacco leaves and safety matches) is becoming so great that Onge culture is likely to be vitally affected in the near future".

Dr. DATTA-MAJUMDER came to the conclusion that "the hunting and food-gathering Onge culture, which had been an autonomous cultural system in the past, is now breaking down".

The Ongi were repeatedly visited by government officers, but the resulting information is paltry. PORTMAN spent several months among the coastal groups of Little Andaman in 1886 and 1887 and collected a few hundred words of their language. In 1901, C. BODEN KLOSS visited a group of Ongi on Rutland Island and one on Little Andaman, both only for a few hours. At some time between 1906 and 1908, A. R. RADCLIFFE-BROWN went to Little Andaman for several weeks and made a preliminary study of the Ongi language. In 1928, EGON VON EICKSTEDT spent a few weeks among the Ongi on Rutland Island and visited briefly several groups on the coast of Little Andaman for the sake of physical anthropological research.

114 Brief reconnaissance tours among the Ongi were made by Indian anthropologists in 1948 (Dr. B. S. GUHA and assistants), 1949 (Dr. A. K. MITRA and assistants) and 1955 (Dr. N. DATTA-MAJUMDER). Professor LIDIO CIPRIANI is the only scholar who engaged in prolonged research among the Ongi of Little Andaman, and this not only on the coast, but also in the interior of the island. In March, 1952, he crossed the island from the East to the West Coast. He was again among the Ongi from February to May, 1953, and from February to May, 1954. A brief report on his 1952 and 1953 expeditions was published in the Bulletin of the Department of Anthropology, Calcutta. He is planning to publish his results in a book. In 1953 and 1954, he was accompanied by a young Bengali, Mr. PRONAB GANGULI, who collected about 400 Ongi words.

[124] When all of Professor CIPRIANI's results are published we shall, no doubt, be well informed about the Ongi's physical anthropology, their material culture and such aspects of their customs as can be observed without a knowledge of their language and without an adequate interpreter. However, as he himself remarks in the letter mentioned above, "the barrier of language makes it difficult to analyze many Ongi facts". Therefore we cannot expect a deeper insight into the Ongi's social organization, religion, myths and customs.

[161] To sum up: We are confronted here with a group that is in
[182] danger of disappearing in the not very distant future. It may survive for several decades in ever diminishing numbers, but its extermination may at any time be accelerated by epidemics. Moreover, its culture is already beginning to undergo substantial changes and may disintegrate very fast. If ever there was a case for urgent research, it is that of the Ongi. When, in the Census Report of 1931, BONINGTON observed with regard to them that here "a vast field of research awaits the anthropologist of the future", the Director General of the Census, J. H. HUTTON, significantly added in a footnote: "Provided, that is, that the Onge survives long enough".

The task is not only urgent, but unusually promising. An ambitious and well trained anthropologist who decides to spend the necessary time among the Ongi of Little Andaman will find an almost virgin field of research and one of the most archaic cultures still extant, a culture which, though already threatened. is at present still essentially intact. He can be sure that his researches, if properly done, will yield results of the first importance which, when published, may rank with EDWARD HORACE MAN's and RADCLIFFE-BROWN's classic works on the great Andaman tribes.

[124] Dr. CIPRIANI's experiences show that a prolonged sojourn on Little Andaman is perfectly feasible. The greatest obstacle to

fieldwork among the Ongi is the language problem. Dr. DATTA-MAJUMDER writes: 114 124

"It should be noted that very little information about the social organization of the Onge has been gathered so far on account of the barrier of language. Not a single interpreter knowing Onge language is available. We came across only two Onge men who knew just a few words of Hindi as a result of their occasional visits to Port Blair".

This was confirmed by Professor CIPRIANI who, in his letter, also mentions the two Ongi who know a little Hindi and adds: "No real Ongi interpreter is, as yet, available". RADCLIFFE-BROWN's experience had been similar. He found only two Ongi men who knew about 20 words of Hindustani.

PORTMAN seems to have been more fortunate in 1886—87. He mentions having had Ongi interpreters. These may have been members of a group of eleven persons who had been captured in the Cinque Islands, between Great and Little Andaman, in 1885 and who had been brought to Port Blair. It would be of great help for anthropological research if a few Ongi could be induced to stay some time in Port Blair and to learn either Hindi or English. In any case, however, an anthropologist wishing to do serious work on Little Andaman will have to remain long enough on the island to acquire sufficient knowledge of the language. He could prepare himself in advance for this task through a thorough study of the available literature on the Great Andaman languages (MAN, PORTMAN, TEMPLE, BASU). Although the languages are different, they are related, and their structure is probably more or less similar. For the Ongi language itself, we have only RADCLIFFE-BROWN's "Notes on the Languages of the Andaman Islands", the list of Ongi words in PORTMAN's "Manual of the Andamanese Languages" (1887) — which RADCLIFFE-BROWN found "of no service whatever" — and a vocabulary of the Ongi language, compiled by M. C. C. BONIG in 1903 and published in Port Blair. 114 122 197

M. C. C. BONIG, (Vocabulary of the Onge Language, exact title not available), Port Blair, 1903. 113

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Census of India, 1911, Vol. II, *The Andaman and Nicobar Islands*, by R. F. LOWIS, pp. 6, 27—29, 81—82, 88.

Census of India, 1931, Vol. II, *The Andaman and Nicobar Islands*, by R. F. LOWIS, pp. 2—5, 14—15.

Census of India, 1931, Vol. II, *The Andaman and Nicobar Islands*, by M. C. C. BONINGTON, pp. 8—11, 16—19, 22.

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A. R. RADCLIFFE-BROWN, *Notes on the Languages of the Andaman Islands*, Anthropos, Vol. IX, 1914, pp. 36—52.
The Andaman Islanders, 2nd ed., Cambridge, 1933, pp. 413—415, 419—422, 436, 439—440, 461—463, 481—482, 484, 491.

RANDHIR KUMAR DE, *The Onge of Little Andaman*, Vanyajati, Vol. V, No. 1, 1957, pp. 12—17.

Jarawa

101 [197] [194] [648] Although the Jarawa inhabit the jungles of South and Middle Andaman, they do not belong to the Great Andaman group of tribes, but are culturally and linguistically related to the Ongi. It is assumed that they originally came from Little Andaman. The Jarawa owe their survival to their having remained isolated as a result of their implacable hostility toward the British (now Indian) colonial settlement. Information on their raids and the punitive expeditions against them will be found in the respective volumes of the Census of India. [161] In 1931 their number was estimated at either 70 (BONINGTON) or 120 (HUTTON). Their culture conforms to the general Andamanese pattern, but differs in various respects from that of their former neighbours, the extinct Great Andaman tribes. Except for their communal huts and such of their material possessions as were found during punitive expeditions, practically nothing is known about it. ooo Our knowledge of their language is restricted to lists of words col-

Our knowledge of their language is restricted to lists of words col- 114
lected from captive Jarawas by COLEBROOK in 1789—90 and by PORT- 648
MAN in the 19th century.

Research on the Jarawa would by highly desirable, but will be impossible as long as they remain hostile.

Census of India, 1901, Vol. III, *The Andaman and Nicobar Islands*, by Sir RICHARD C. TEMPLE, pp. 4, 52—53, 68—90, 117—121. 113

Census of India, 1911, Vol. II, *The Andaman and Nicobar Islands*, by R. F. LOWIS, pp. 7, 31—39, 82—83.

Census of India, 1921, Vol. II, *The Andaman and Nicobar Islands*, by R. F. LOWIS, pp. 5, 39—43.

Census of India, 1931, Vol. II, *The Andaman and Nicobar Islands*, by M. C. C. BONINGTON, pp. 8—9, 15—16, 23.

A. R. RADCLIFFE-BROWN, *Notes on the Languages of the Andaman Islands*, Anthropos, vol. IX, 1914, pp. 38—39.
The Andaman Islanders, 2nd ed., Cambridge, 1933, pp. 86, 410, 413—415, 423, 432—433, 439—440.

North Sentinel Island

North Sentinel is an island of about 30 square miles west of the 101
southern tip of Great Andaman. It has been briefly visited by Govern- [131]
ment officers on various occasions, but it seems that no contacts were [648]
ever made with the natives, except on December 27th, 1886, when
the Ongi, who accompanied PORTMAN on his trip, "caught" some of
them (Census of India, 1901, p. 92). From PORTMAN's report it does
not become clear whether or not he saw these temporary captives
himself. Our knowledge of the culture is restricted to a few obser-
vations on their material possessions. The communal huts differ
from those of the rest of the Andamanese. The canoes differ from
those of both Great and Little Andaman, but are more like those of
the latter. The bows resemble those of the Jarawa and Ongi. On the [197]
basis of this it is assumed that the natives are related to the Jarawa
and Ongi, but PORTMAN's Ongi companions are said to have found
that the persons whom they had caught talked "an entirely different
language".

In 1901 the number of the natives was estimated as 117. This 161
estimate was based on the area of the island and the assumption
that the density of the population was approximately the same as
that of great Andaman in precolonial times. The figure was not
changed in either 1911 or 1921. In 1931 the number was estimated as
50 "on conclusions arrived at from several visits during the last
decade and after counting the number of huts found and the sleeping
places", but it is said that this does not necessarily mean a decrease
in population. "It is believed that the population is stationary, for

161 the Sentinel islanders have been kept free from direct contact with civilization".

114 181 [48] In the Census Report of 1931 it is said that the natives "like the Jarawas are entirely hostile", but no reason is given for this statement. Previous visitors found them exceedingly shy, but not hostile. When seeing foreigners, they simply fled into the jungle. M. C. C. BONIG who visited North Sentinel Island on the 10th of March, 1911, in the course of that year's Census operations, wrote:

"The people appear very timid and it seems not unlikely that if they are approached frequently with presents, they will become friendly of their own accord".

114 No information on North Sentinel Island more recent than the 1931 Census Report has come to our knowledge. If the situation has not changed since then, the culture of its natives should be completely intact and untouched by outer influences — a unique case among the primitive tribes of southern Asia. Here, therefore, is a truly ideal opportunity for anthropological research.

113 Census of India, 1901, Vol. III, *The Andaman and Nicobar Islands*, by Sir RICHARD C. TEMPLE, pp. 4, 92 (PORTMAN's visit).

Census of India, 1911, Vol. II, *The Andaman and Nicobar Islands*, by R. F. LOWIS, pp. 28—29 (BONIG's Report).

Census of India, 1931, Vol. II, *The Andaman and Nicobar Islands*, by M. C. C. BONINGTON, pp. 22—23.

A. R. RADCLIFFE-BROWN, *The Andaman Islanders*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, 1933, pp. 412—413, 422—423, 491—492.